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National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21*

Uzbekistan

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Methodology and consultation process undertaken in the preparation of the national report

1. This third national report has been prepared in accordance with the guidelines of the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/DEC/17/119) and focuses on the implementation of the human rights obligations of Uzbekistan and the recommendations accepted during the second universal periodic review of Uzbekistan, in April 2013.

2. On 14 December 2014, a national plan of action was adopted for the period 2014–2016 for the implementation of recommendations of the Human Rights Council and of the United Nations treaty bodies following their consideration of the periodic reports of Uzbekistan on human rights and freedoms. Over 60 State bodies and civil society institutions, as well as experts from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and United Nations specialized agencies in Uzbekistan, took part in drawing up the plan of action. The draft national plan of action was widely discussed at round-table meetings held on 25 October 2013, 18 December 2013 and 30 and 31 January 2014. The national plan of action for 2014 to 2016 was supplemented on 15 June 2015 with Section II, under the title "Implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination following consideration of the eighth and ninth periodic reports of Uzbekistan, 2015–2018", and Section III, entitled "Implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights following consideration of the second periodic report of Uzbekistan, 2015–2017".

3. The present national report was prepared by the National Centre for Human Rights on the basis of information provided by more than 40 State bodies and 30 non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The report was discussed by the interdepartmental working group on the observance of human rights and freedoms, by law enforcement agencies and other State bodies, and also by the Committee of the lower house of parliament on democratic institutions, NGOs and local government bodies.

A12, A22, A24, A25, A28. Adoption of international standards and cooperation with international human rights mechanisms and treaty bodies

4. An Action Strategy on Five Priority Areas of the Country's Development for 2017–2021 and a State programme entitled Year of Dialogue with the People and Human Interests for 2017 were adopted on 7 February 2017. On 25 October 2016 Uzbekistan ratified the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and stepped up its efforts to prepare for the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. With the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the latter Convention was translated into Uzbek, presented to the parliament and widely disseminated among government bodies, NGOs and the population. Preparation began on a draft law on the rights of persons with disabilities, taking into consideration all provisions of the Convention, and a programme was adopted in 2017 outlining integrated measures for the further improvement of the support system for persons with disabilities and a strengthening of their rights and freedoms. A presidential decree was issued on 1 December 2017 on measures for the basic improvement of the system of support for persons with disabilities, and an interdepartmental working group was set up under the National Centre for Human Rights to prepare for ratification of the Convention. United Nations agencies and the Government of Uzbekistan reached an agreement, in the framework of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for 2016–2020, to work in favour of the Convention's ratification.

5. The level of cooperation between Uzbekistan and OHCHR, the treaty bodies, United Nations special procedures and international NGOs on questions of human rights and freedoms has risen markedly. In 2016 a memorandum of understanding was concluded

between the National Centre for Human Rights and the United Nations representative office. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, visited Uzbekistan from 10 to 12 May 2017. In June 2017, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres visited the country, and from 28 August 2017 to 11 September 2017 Uzbekistan was visited by the Director of the Europe and Central Asia Division of Human Rights Watch, Hugh Williamson, and by the organization's Office Director, Steve Swerdlow. From 2 to 12 October 2017 it was visited by Ahmed Shaheed, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief of the Human Rights Council, and from 5 to 8 September 2017 a delegation from the OHCHR regional office for Central Asia, headed by Ryszard Komenda, visited the country.

6. The President of Uzbekistan addressed the seventy-second session of the United Nations General Assembly from 18 to 20 September 2017 and put forward initiatives aimed at ensuring stability and sustainable development in the Central Asian region. He proposed the adoption of a special General Assembly resolution on that question, and also proposed the drafting of United Nations conventions on the rights of young persons and the adoption of a General Assembly resolution entitled "Education and religious tolerance".

7. Between 2014 and 2016, United Nations treaty bodies considered the eighth and ninth periodic reports on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the second periodic report on the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the fourth periodic report on the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; and the fifth periodic report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

8. In 2015, Uzbekistan submitted its common core document, and in 2017 it submitted the fifth periodic report on the implementation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

9. Constructive dialogue and an exchange of information on human rights and freedoms was maintained with United Nations special procedures. Between 2014 and 2017 the special procedure received over 50 analytical documents on mechanisms for the realization of various categories of human rights and freedoms. A great deal of attention was paid to developing cooperation with international organizations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the European Union, the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and bodies under the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization represented a major component of the country's interaction in the field of human rights.

A41. Constitutional and legislative framework for the protection of human rights and freedoms

10. A number of constitutional amendments have been introduced as part of the improvement of the basis for defending human rights and freedoms. Article 32 has been amended with a provision on citizens' participation in public oversight of State bodies. The joint powers of the parliamentary chambers have been extended so that oversight hearings are held on the annual reports from the Cabinet of Ministers regarding the main issues in the country's social and economic life and on the Prime Minister's programme of action when his candidacy is submitted before the Legislative Chamber (the lower house of parliament).

11. In order to strengthen the independence of the judiciary, in 2017 the Constitution has been amended with provisions giving the Senate the power to designate, upon the nomination of the President, the Chair of the Supreme Judicial Council and to name and dismiss the chairs and vice-chairs of the courts in the provinces and in Tashkent, as

proposed by the Council, with the President confirming the members of the Council. Provisions have been introduced into the Constitution to regulate the status of the Constitutional Court. The Court has been given additional powers to review cases raising questions of constitutionality that have been referred by courts to the Supreme Court, and also to present information to the parliamentary chambers and to the President every year on the status of constitutionality in the country. The Central Electoral Commission, an independent, permanent and open State body that organizes elections for the President and for the Oliy Majlis (the national parliament) and referendums in Uzbekistan, has been given the right to bring cases involving questions of constitutionality before the Constitutional Court upon the proposal of the Office of the Human Rights Commissioner (Ombudsman).

12. Reforms aimed at strengthening human rights and freedoms, setting a concrete legal basis for the work of legislative, executive and judicial bodies and developing cooperation and interaction between State bodies and civil society institutions for the defence of human rights continued in the period 2014–2017. The Parliamentary Oversight Act clearly defined targets, forms and procedures for parliamentary oversight not only of executive bodies but also of law enforcement agencies. It provided for the use of hearings to receive reports on their activities, parliamentary and members' questioning sessions, monitoring of the implementation of laws after adoption and the right to conduct parliamentary inquiries. Within the Legislative Chamber, commissions on the family and women and on health were established; in the Senate, a commission on procuratorial and internal affairs bodies was set up, and the post of the Cabinet of Ministers plenipotentiary representative in parliament was instituted.

13. The Internal Affairs Agencies Act, the new version of the Procurator's Office Act, the Act on the Serving of Sentences of Administrative Detention, the Anti-Corruption Act and other laws have been adopted to improve the human rights activities of law enforcement bodies. The responsibility of law enforcement bodies for violations of the law has been strengthened and a system has been set up to make them accountable to the population, to citizens' associations and to representatives of State bodies. The Procurator General regularly submits a report to the Senate on the activities of the procuratorial authorities. Since 2016, the procuratorial authorities have reported annually to local representative bodies on the status of the rule of law and on efforts to fight crime. Prosecutors presented some 3,000 reports on this subject to councils of peoples' deputies (*kengashes*) and local government authorities in 2016–2017.

14. Fundamental changes have been introduced into the Code of Criminal Procedure to give judges greater leeway to apply preventive measures other than pretrial detention. The changes are also aimed at strengthening the basis for acquittals, at prohibiting referral of criminal cases for additional investigation and at granting courts the right to carry out their own verification of facts that have not been established during initial inquiries and pretrial investigations. Penalties such as short-term rigorous imprisonment have been removed from the Criminal Code, and the detention period has been reduced from 72 hours to 48 hours. The maximum period for holding a person in remand and for the pretrial investigation has been reduced as well.

15. Guarantees of the constitutional right to file complaints with public bodies, including law enforcement agencies, have been strengthened. A presidential decree of 28 December 2016 established people's contact offices and a virtual portal for contacting the President. On 11 September 2017, provisions were introduced into the Natural and Legal Persons Appeals Act prohibiting the turning away of appeals on any matter, establishing outreach, personal and public reception sessions to address citizens' needs and making extensive use of real-time information and communication technologies, including through the use of confidential hotlines, hotlines to State bodies and videoconferencing. The law establishes the legal status of the people's contact offices and the virtual portal for contacting the President that have been set up to monitor, by direct dialogue with the public, the effective consideration of citizens' petitions by State agencies and officials.

16. As part of the Year of Dialogue with the People and Human Interests, over 30 laws and 300 other regulations have been adopted reforming public administration.

A42 and A47. Public institutions and good governance

17. The policy framework for administrative reform adopted by the presidential decree of 8 September 2017 introduced radical reforms in the system of governance and in the institutional, legal and organizational basis for the work of the executive branch. It proclaimed the principle according to which the people are not at the service of State bodies; State bodies are at the service of the people. To improve the delivery of State services to the public, new government ministries have been established for the development of information and communication technologies, preschool education, employment and labour relations, culture and housing and communal services. The structures, tasks and functions of over 20 government ministries, departments and other organizations were revised in 2017, and more than 20 State administrations, economic management bodies and other organizations underwent transformation.

18. As part of the modernization of public services, a presidential decree was adopted on 12 December 2017 on measures to radically reform the national system for the provision of public services. The decree established a public services agency under the Ministry of Justice to monitor and assess the effectiveness of State bodies in the provision of services. The single "one-stop-shop" contact points for entrepreneurs were converted into public service centres operating under the presidential people's contact offices in the districts and towns, and a single registry of State services was established. The State programme entitled 2018: Year of Support for Active Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Technology includes plans to extend the range of tasks carried out for the public by the one-stop-shops with the addition of 40 more services for legal entities and 19 more for physical persons.

19. The Administrative Procedures Act established modern organizational and legal structures for the activities of executive branch bodies and for the effective provision of State services for the realization of the rights of physical persons and legal entities. The Code of Administrative Procedure governs the settlement of disputes in the legal relations between government bodies or their officials on the one hand and physical persons and legal entities on the other.

20. Modern information and communication technologies have been introduced in the country to establish an effective dialogue with the public and ensure the timely resolution of the population's day-to-day problems. To this end, the Electronic Government Act was adopted on 9 December 2015, and a presidential decree was issued on 30 June 2017 on measures to radically improve conditions for the development of the information technology industry in Uzbekistan. It was on the basis of these instruments that the Information Centre for Supporting the Development and Introduction of Information Technologies was established.

A45. National human rights institutions

21. Additional measures have been taken to strengthen national human rights institutions and to bring them into line with the Paris Principles, by consolidating the legal status of the Office of the Human Rights Commissioner (Ombudsman). In 2017, the office of the Human Rights Commissioner (Ombudsman) of the Oliy Majlis was: empowered to bring cases before the Constitutional Court to review the constitutionality of laws and regulations on human rights; authorized to prepare special reports on the rights of certain categories of citizens; given the right to actively participate in the drafting of legislation and to interact with civil society institutions; and authorized to strengthen its regional representative offices. Measures have been taken to improve the effectiveness of the National Centre for Human Rights and to increase cooperation with OHCHR and other international bodies and civil society institutions. The website of the Centre has been refurbished and a conceptual framework is now being implemented for the Centre's cooperation with NGOs for the preparation of national and alternative reports on human rights and for informational and educational activities. A book has been published under the title *Public Oversight of Laws in Uzbekistan*.

22. To address the causes and circumstances of the violation of the rights of entrepreneurs and to strengthen monitoring in this field, the office of the presidential Commissioner for the protection of the rights and interests of business entities (Business Ombudsman) has been established. The introduction of an Ombudsman's office for children and youth is currently being considered, and a bill to establish such an office under the Presidency has been drawn up.

23. In the implementation of international human rights standards, the role of the Institute for Monitoring Current Legislation has been strengthened. In 2015–2017, the Institute prepared over 200 analyses relating to the introduction of international standards in the law. A presidential decree of 8 February 2017 gave the Institute additional powers to draw up proposals for improving the effectiveness of the parliament's activities in drafting legislation; it can now issue expert opinions on bills and monitor their practical implementation.

A46. National plans of action in the field of human rights and freedoms

24. Uzbekistan has adopted national action plans and State programmes for the implementation of international standards for human rights and freedoms. In addition to the national action plan for the implementation of the recommendations issued by the Human Rights Council and the United Nations treaty bodies following consideration of the country's national reports on human rights and freedoms in the period 2014–2016, the following have also been adopted. On 26 August 2016, a national action plan for 2016–2019 was adopted for the implementation of the recommendations issued by the United Nations Human Rights Committee after it considered the fourth periodic report of Uzbekistan. On 16 June 2017, the houses of parliament adopted the action plan for the further development of cooperation with OHCHR. On 27 September 2017, a presidential decree approved a plan of practical measures (a road map) to push forward initiatives put forward by Uzbekistan at the seventy-second session of the United Nations General Assembly and to implement agreements reached after negotiations with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. A national action plan has been adopted to implement the recommendations issued by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on 13 October 2017, and road maps have been drawn up with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union.

25. A State programme to counter corruption in 2017–2018 and a plan of action to improve the effectiveness of efforts to combat human trafficking in the same period have also been adopted, as have: an implementation plan for 2017–2018 for ILO conventions ratified by Uzbekistan; a decent work programme for 2017–2020; a series of measures to prevent domestic violence in 2017–2018; a programme of comprehensive measures, adopted on 1 December 2017, to further improve the system of support for persons with disabilities and strengthen guarantees for the protection of their rights and freedoms; a State programme for the development of the Aral Sea region in 2017–2021; and others. State programmes have been implemented for the Year of the Healthy Child (2014), the Year of Attention and Care for the Older Generation (2015), the Year of Mother and Child Health (2016), the Year of Dialogue with the People and Human Interests (2017) and the Year of Support for Active Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Technology (2018).

A51. Human rights education

26. The improvement of the country's human rights education system is based on the principle of extending the public's access to legal information and on consistent measures to expand educational efforts for various categories of the public, specifically young people, women and students at various secondary schools and in higher education. Training programmes on the rights of the child, women's rights, human rights in the justice system and measures against domestic violence, torture, human trafficking and corruption have

been introduced in the preparation programmes for law enforcement staff, judicial officers, members of the Bar, notaries, legal service personnel and medical and social workers.

27. On 8 February 2018 a presidential decision was issued on measures to radically improve the dissemination of legislation, and the Dissemination of and Access to Legal Information Act was adopted on 7 September 2017. The Act defined the concept of legal information and strengthened guarantees of access to it and to the agencies and organizations responsible for its dissemination. On 19 January 2017 a presidential decision was issued on measures to radically improve legal services. The decision placed responsibility for improving legal culture and legal literacy on the legal services of State agencies and organizations. A presidential decision issued on 13 September 2017 adopted a programme of comprehensive measures to develop the system for the publication and dissemination of books and to improve the culture of literacy.

28. Measures have been taken to raise awareness of human rights among vulnerable categories of citizens living in difficult conditions. A decision of the Cabinet of Ministers was issued on 8 August 2017 on measures for organizing and conducting training courses for entrepreneurs, and another was issued on 14 October 2017 approving regulations for admission to training at regional vocational training centres for unemployed persons.

29. With the assistance of international organizations, the following have been published in Uzbek: the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; a compendium of documentation on the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the general comments of the United Nations Committee against Torture; a compilation of international instruments and legislation of Uzbekistan to combat corruption; and other documentation for human rights education. In addition, manuals have been produced in Uzbek, including under the following titles: International Standards for the Legal Profession; Judicial Bodies in Other Countries; Compendium of Documentation of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child; Implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and on the Participation of Children in Armed Conflict. Five legal journals and some 40 newspapers covering questions of law are published in the country, with a circulation of several thousand copies.

B8. Human rights and counter-terrorism

30. The counter-terrorism legislation in Uzbekistan is fully in line with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Terrorism is covered by article 155 of the Criminal Code, and persons who carry out terrorist acts are guaranteed equal rights before the law; including the right to life, insofar as article 155 of the Criminal Code does not prescribe the death penalty; the right to protection against torture, in accordance with article 235 of the Criminal Code; the right to security of person and protection from unlawful detention or remand in custody, with the introduction of habeas corpus in Uzbekistan; the right to have their cases handled by an independent and impartial court; as well as the right to a defence, to telephone a lawyer or close relative from the actual moment of arrest and to meet with a lawyer in private, without any restriction as to the duration of the meeting; along with a number of other rights.

31. In 2017, the Cabinet of Ministers issued a decision approving regulations for compensation for damages to persons or to the property of physical or legal persons as a result of counter-terrorism operations. The regulations provide for compensation of the costs and losses incurred by such persons or their property and the provision of free medical assistance in the event of personal injury or death, the provision of a pension to surviving family members and of benefits for the loss of a breadwinner.

32. To protect the rights of the public during emergencies, a bill addressing emergency situations has been drawn up and posted on the www.gov.uz website. It is currently the subject of an expert review. Another bill is also being drafted, on the national security service.

B31. Equality and non-discrimination

33. The principle of non-discrimination has continually been strengthened in Uzbekistan with the adoption of the following laws: the Natural and Legal Persons Appeals Act of 11 September 2017; the Act on Transparency in the Work of State and Government Bodies of 5 May 2014; the Youth Policy Act of 14 September 2016; the Dissemination of and Access to Legal Information Act of 7 September 2017; the Internal Affairs Agencies Act of 16 October 2016; and the Act on the Serving of Sentences of Administrative Detention of 9 January 2017. The principle of non-discrimination has also been taken into account in the drafting of bills with the aim of guaranteeing equal rights and opportunities for women and men, addressing emergency situations and preventing domestic violence.

34. In December 2016 a presidential decree was issued granting citizenship to people living in Uzbekistan but who for various reasons were outside the country when the Citizenship Act entered into force. Since then, 1,243 persons have been granted citizenship. In order to ensure inter-ethnic harmony and tolerance in society among the representatives of the more than 130 ethnic groups and nationalities in Uzbekistan, a presidential decree was adopted on 19 May 2017 establishing a Cabinet of Ministers Committee on Inter-ethnic Relations and Friendly Relations with Foreign Countries, and a framework has been adopted establishing State policy priorities for inter-ethnic relations.

B41. The right to development

35. Uzbekistan successfully fulfilled its commitments in respect of the millennium development goals. It has made significant progress in reducing poverty, has increased enrolment in secondary specialized vocational education and has ensured gender equality in general secondary education. Women account for 45.7 per cent of the workforce and women's employment has increased significantly in small businesses and private enterprise. Infant mortality and malnutrition have declined and the maternal mortality rate has dropped. The spread of HIV/AIDS has slowed and the morbidity and mortality rates for tuberculosis and malaria have fallen. Water and land resource management has been improved. Biological resources and ecosystems have been protected, and their sustainable use has been ensured. Effective partnerships have been established with other countries to achieve sustainable development.

36. The United Nations General Assembly resolution on the Sustainable Development Goals served as the basis for defining 16 goals and 117 targets in the national system of sustainable development goals for Uzbekistan. The key priorities of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) have been identified, with a focus on effective employment and targeted social protection, improvements in the quality of health care and education, environmental protection and the better provision of public services. The action strategy serves as the road map for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Uzbekistan.

B71. Human rights and the environment

37. Issues of environmental protection and environmental monitoring by the State and by civil society are covered in the following new laws: the Environmental Monitoring Act, the Protection and Use of Fauna Act, the Protection and Use of Flora Act and the presidential decision on measures to radically improve and develop the waste management system between 2017 and 2021, which addresses the creation of decent living conditions and the improvement of the health and environmental situation in the country. The following are currently being implemented in the country: the Programme of Action to Protect the Environment for 2013–2017; the Comprehensive Programme of Action to Mitigate the Consequences of the Aral Disaster and to Restore and Economically and Socially Develop the Aral Region for 2015–2018; and the Uzbekistan Environmental Monitoring Programme for 2016–2020.

38. A presidential decree was issued on 21 April 2017 on improving governance in the ecological field and in environmental protection. By this decree, the State Committee for Nature Protection was transformed into the State Committee on the Ecology and Environmental Protection, which is responsible for State monitoring of compliance with environmental protection legislation and for ensuring the environmental rights of the public. The State Committee's inspectorates have the power to impose administrative penalties on persons who commit environmental protection offences.

D1. Civil and political rights

39. Laws have been adopted in Uzbekistan to establish the organizational and legal mechanisms required for the realization of civil and political rights. An Act has been adopted amending articles 32, 78, 93, 98, 103 and 117 of the Constitution; it establishes that the Central Electoral Commission is to organize and hold elections and it broadens the Commission's power in distributing funds for the participation in the elections of political parties and for the involvement of the international community. The Administrative Liability Code has been amended with the addition of articles under the following titles: "Illegal interference in the work of the Central Electoral Commission, its subordinate electoral commissions and referendum commissions"; "Failure to implement the decisions of the Central Electoral Commission, its subordinate electoral commissions and referendum commissions"; "Violation of the rights of a candidate, a candidate's authorized representative, an observer or an authorized representative of a political party"; "Violation of the conditions and procedures for campaigning in elections and campaigning on matters subject to a referendum"; and "Spreading false information about candidates or political parties".

40. The Presidential Elections Act has been amended. The number of signatures required for the nomination of presidential candidates has been reduced from 5 per cent to 1 per cent of all voters. The concept of election campaigning has been established and a day of silence has been instituted whereby campaigning is not allowed on the day of the election and for a day prior to the start of voting. The types, forms and methods of campaigning are defined by the law and standards have been introduced prohibiting the publishing or disclosure of public opinion polls, election forecasts and other research related to the elections during the five days prior to the election and on election day and allowing for the establishment of polling stations at remand centres. Work is under way to prepare a draft electoral code.

41. In order to improve the realization of civil and political rights, amendments were made in 2017 to the Citizenship Act and, by presidential decree, to the regulations for reviewing matters relating to Uzbek citizenship, to the procedure for Uzbek citizens leaving the country and to the regulations for the granting of political asylum.

42. Much has been done to strengthen the legal basis for the development of civil society institutions and for the independence of the media. Some 10 pieces of legislation have been adopted in this area, including the following laws: the new version of the Citizens' Self-Governance Act, the Act on Transparency in the Work of State and Government Bodies, the Social Partnership Act and other standard-setting legal enactments. These laws have given civil society a greater role in tackling the most important issues of the country's social and economic development and have led to greater engagement on the part of the public and a better balance of interests in society.

43. A presidential decree issued on 3 February 2017 on measures for the further improvement of the institution of *makhallas* identified the tasks currently faced by *makhallas* in educating young people, supporting socially vulnerable groups, preventing crime and strengthening the public's respect for the law. A presidential decree issued on 5 July 2017 to improve the effectiveness of the State's youth policy and support the Youth Union of Uzbekistan created a new youth organization, the Youth Union of Uzbekistan, which has been tasked with increasing youth participation in all spheres of society. To support the development of the youth movement, a youth policy service of the Office of the President has adopted a programme of comprehensive measures, and national and local

interdepartmental councils on youth have been established to monitor the situation in this area.

D8. Right to privacy, marriage and family life

44. Traditionally, a great deal of attention has been devoted in Uzbekistan to the protection of the family and the rights and interests of children, youth, women and older persons. Articles 46[1] and 141[1] have been introduced into the Administrative Liability Code and the Criminal Code under the title "Violation of privacy", thus criminalizing the collection and dissemination, without a person's consent, of information about his or her private life if it consists of a personal or family secret.

45. The search, seizure or inspection of homes or other premises or grounds occupied by a person and the seizure and confiscation of postal and telegraphic correspondence or its extraction from communications facilities and the surveillance of conversations taken from telephonic or other means of communications are allowed only in the cases, and in accordance with the procedures, set out by the Code of Criminal Procedure. The provisions prohibit the divulgence of medical or commercial secrets and private correspondence, notarial acts or any other information that may cause moral or material harm to citizens.

46. With the consent of the legal or physical persons in question, agencies carrying out police work may make use of places of employment and residential premises, means of transport and other property to make video or audio recordings, to record films and to take photographs that do not pose a risk to a person's life or health. They are obliged not to divulge, without the consent of the citizens in question, information about their private lives or affecting their honour and dignity.

D25. Prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

47. Additional measures have been taken to combat torture by improving the country's legislation and law enforcement. The recent legislation continues efforts to prohibit torture. The Internal Affairs Agencies Act strengthened the prohibition of torture, violence and other cruel or degrading treatment and the prevention of acts involving the intentional infliction of pain or physical or mental suffering on citizens; the Act on the Serving of Sentences of Administrative Detention of 9 January 2017 includes provisions aimed at preventing and eliminating torture of persons under administrative detention. The bill addressing emergency situations will ensure that article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights cannot be suspended in the event of a state of emergency.

48. Under a presidential decree of 30 November 2017 on additional measures to strengthen guarantees of the rights and freedoms of citizens during judicial investigations, information obtained through violations of procedural laws, including through the use of torture, is inadmissible as evidence in criminal cases. The President of Uzbekistan has categorically stated that the use of torture or of psychological or physical coercion or other forms of violence against persons who are in detention or subject to criminal prosecution will not be tolerated in Uzbekistan. In a message delivered to the Oliy Majlis on 22 December 2017, the President stated once again that officers who committed such acts and persons carrying out such acts "under orders" must be prosecuted.

D26. Conditions of detention

49. Efforts to fully ensure the rights and interests of persons held in pretrial detention facilities and penal institutions have continued. In the past 15 years, the number of inmates at places of deprivation of liberty has been cut in half. The incarceration rate is now 133 per 100,000 population. The prison occupancy rate averages 80 per cent and at some facilities it does not exceed 30 per cent. The rate at the country's only young offenders' institution is *under 10 per cent. An Amnesty* Act passed by the Senate on 12 October 2016 provided an

amnesty from prosecution or punishment for over 15,500 persons, and more than 2,800 people were released from places of deprivation of liberty. Under a presidential pardon, the sentences of 2,700 people were cleared, including over 900 who were released from places of deprivation of liberty.

50. A law passed on 29 March 2017 introduced a series of amendments into the Penal Enforcement Code to strengthen safeguards for the effective protection of the rights of convicted persons. In particular, convicted persons have the following rights: to receive information on procedures and conditions for the serving of their sentences and information on their rights and obligations; to file proposals, statements and complaints in their native language or in another language with the prison administration or with the body enforcing the sentence; and to receive outpatient and inpatient medical attention. A programme has been adopted to improve the country's penal correction system in the period 2018–2022. It calls for the establishment of additional mechanisms to safeguard the rights of convicts.

D27. Prohibition of slavery and human trafficking

51. On 14 March 2017 the National Interdepartmental Commission against Human Trafficking, a body under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, adopted the programme of action against human trafficking for 2017–2018. The programme gives effect to the Trafficking in Persons Act and to article 135 of the Criminal Code, entitled "Human trafficking". Special attention is given to the legal protection of trafficking victims and to their psychological, medical and vocational rehabilitation, including placement in employment and other types of social protection. The National Rehabilitation Centre of the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations provided assistance to a total of 1,184 human trafficking victims in 2015, 2016 and 2017 (respectively to 503, 460 and 221 victims). In 2017, 127 victims of human trafficking and more than 117,000 persons returning from other countries were placed in employment; approximately 500,000 persons returning from other countries, including 346 human trafficking victims, underwent medical check-ups, and over 100,000 awareness-raising events were held with the participation of some 1.5 million citizens.

52. In order to prevent the departure of citizens for illegal employment in other countries, the Ministry of Employment carries out activities to help with the employment of the country's citizens abroad. The centre for pre-exit adaptation and training and the Ministry's External Labour Migration Agency provides advice for citizens leaving Uzbekistan for work in other countries on the labour and migration legislation and the customs of the receiving countries. NGOs provide a great deal of assistance in preventing human trafficking and in identifying trafficking victims and the perpetrators of this crime. Istikbolli Avlod, an NGO, and the Women's Committee have actively provided assistance to victims of human trafficking. They offer information and advisory services to people travelling to other countries, assist in the return of victims of human trafficking and take care of matters related to their rehabilitation.

D29. Domestic violence

53. The prevention of attacks against the personal safety, life and health of citizens has been a focus of attention. A law adopted on 10 August 2015 amended the penalties applicable under article 121 (2) of the Criminal Code, which addresses coercion of women to enter into sexual relationships, with a punishment of 3 to 5 years of deprivation of liberty, and articles 130[1], 133 and 138 have been added to the Criminal Code, respectively addressing the preparation, introduction, dissemination, advertising and demonstration of material advocating a cult of violence or cruelty; human organ and tissue recuperation; and violent, illegal deprivation of liberty.

54. A bill on the prevention of domestic violence has been drawn up by the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The law defines the concepts of domestic violence (economic, physical, psychological and sexual violence) and victims of violence and establishes general and individual prevention measures to avoid the most serious consequences of domestic violence. On 6 July 2017 the Interdepartmental Commission to

Combat Crime and Prevent Offences adopted a package of measures to prevent domestic violence in 2017–2018. The package provides for measures to study the causes and conditions that lead to domestic violence.

55. In the regions, there are 9 social and legal support centres and 170 advisory centres for women operating as NGOs and offering public services. They provide social, psychological and legal support and assistance in the job placement of women living in difficult circumstances.

D33. Arbitrary arrest and detention

56. Oversight of the justification and legality of internal affairs agencies' actions in restricting the rights of citizens to liberty and security of person has been significantly strengthened. A presidential decree was adopted on 10 April 2017 on measures to significantly enhance the effectiveness of the work of internal affairs bodies and to give them greater responsibility for ensuring public order and for appropriately protecting citizens' rights, freedoms and legitimate interests. A presidential decision on measures to radically improve the work of internal affairs bodies in criminal investigations was adopted on 18 April 2017. Within the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the following have been established: a department to handle complaints from physical and legal persons and procedural matters; a section for the defence of human rights and relations with international organizations; and the National Interdepartmental Commission to Combat Crime and Prevent Offences. Thursdays of every week have been designated as crime prevention day for internal affairs bodies, with a spotlight on receiving the public, meeting the population and discussing the rule of law in the country, including through the use of the media.

57. The Ministry's police stations maintain registries of persons that have been brought in to internal affairs bodies, providing for strict accountability. At least twice a day, monitoring is carried out to make sure that the appropriate documentation has been properly filled in and processed and to ensure compliance with the legality of detention of persons brought to police stations. Investigative bodies have been provided with improved equipment for the video recording of their investigation work. Video surveillance cameras have been installed in police cells and at prison remand units.

58. Under article 381[7] of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the period of initial inquiry must not go beyond one month from the initiation of criminal proceedings. According to article 351 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, pretrial investigations must be completed within three months of the initiation of criminal proceedings. The period of initial inquiry may be prolonged by the procurator for up to 20 days, and a pretrial investigation may be extended for up to 5 months, by a procurator of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, a procurator of one of the provinces or of the city of Tashkent, or a procurator of equivalent rank. A pretrial investigation may be further extended by the Procurator General or a deputy procurator general for up to 7 months. Article 245 of the Code of Criminal Procedure establishes that pretrial detention or house arrest during the investigation of a criminal offence must not exceed 3 months. The possibility of extension is considered by a court, upon request from the following: for up to 5 months, from a procurator of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, a procurator of one of the provinces or of the city of Tashkent, or a procurator of equivalent rank; or for up to 7 months, from the Procurator General or a deputy procurator general. No further extensions are allowed. Every 10 days, procurators check on the legality of detention of persons at temporary holding facilities, and they do so once a month at remand centres. They regularly check on the orders issued by the facilities' administrations and have the right to file protests against them if they are not in compliance with the law. The Office of the Procurator General maintains a round-the-clock call centre with a hotline (1007) to receive complaints.

D41. Freedom of movement

59. To provide for better conditions for the public, to eliminate bureaucracy and corruption in the exit visa application process and to simplify the procedures for passing border controls, a presidential decree of 16 August 2017 stipulated that, beginning on 1 January 2019, biometric passports will be introduced for citizens of Uzbekistan leaving the country, and there will be no more need to apply for stickers authorizing departure (exit visas). Responsibility for handling citizens' applications for the biometric passport has been assigned to a new structure composed of the Migration and Citizenship Documentation Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the consular administration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A new version of the regulations on the passport system and of the rules for citizens exiting the country is currently being drafted.

60. The Citizenship Act was amended on 23 September 2016 and a presidential decree was adopted on 7 March 2017 amending the regulations for reviewing matters relating to Uzbek citizenship. According to these provisions, citizenship may be lost in the following circumstances: if there is credible evidence that a citizen has entered military service for a foreign State or its security service, or the police, judiciary or other executive or administrative bodies of the State; or if a person has caused substantial harm to the interests of society and the State by engaging in activities for a foreign State or by committing crimes against peace and security.

D42. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

61. There are 2,242 religious organizations of 6 different faiths in Uzbekistan. More than 1,200 books on Islamic themes have been published, and the newspapers *Islam Nuri* and *Slovo Zhizni* and the magazines *Hidoyat* and *Vostok Svyshe* respectively have circulations of 28,000, 1,500, 87,000 and 1,000. The Bible Society of Uzbekistan has translated the Bible into the Uzbek language. The Tashkent Eparchy has imported a total of 81,640 copies of religious books, under 318 titles. In 2017 it imported 332 titles, with a total of 10,053 copies.

62. There are 13 religious schools in the country, of which 11 are Muslim and 2 are Christian. Of these, 4 are at the level of higher education: the Tashkent Islamic University; the Mir-i-Arab Madrasa of Higher Education (in Bukhara); the Tashkent Orthodox Seminary and the Tashkent Protestant Seminary. In 2017, presidential decrees were issued establishing the Imam Tirmidhi International Research Centre and the Imam Al-Bukhari International Scientific Research Centre under the Cabinet of Ministers. Also in 2017, the Islamic Civilization Centre and the Islamic Academy were established and drafting began on a United Nations resolution under the title "Enlightenment and religious tolerance", put forward by the President of Uzbekistan at the seventy-second session of the United Nations General Assembly. Information and awareness-raising activities are regularly held on the importance of preventing racial discrimination and ensuring inter-ethnic and interreligious harmony.

D43. Freedom of opinion and expression

63. As part of efforts to ensure the human right to freedom of opinion and expression, amendments have been made to the new version of the Media Act, to the Information Technology Act and to the Protection of the Professional Activities of Journalists Act, and the Act on Transparency in the Work of the State and Administrative Authorities has been adopted. These provide guarantees of free access to information and establish the basis for a comprehensive system to protect the professional activities of journalists.

64. The number of electronic media outlets is 499, of which 395 are websites, 100 are television or radio stations and 4 are news agencies. The number of persons who use the Internet is 14.7 million. The country has 693 newspapers (326 of which are publicly-owned and 367 private), 330 magazines (142 publicly-owned and 188 private), 131 publishing

houses, 4 news agencies, 68 television stations (34 public and 34 private) and 37 radio stations (5 public and 32 private).

65. The development of information technologies, with implementation of the Electronic Government Act, the Single Portal for Interactive Public Services, the Centre for Data Processing and the interdepartmental network for data transmission, has helped make it possible to broaden coverage by the country's Internet news portals. The national television and radio stations have begun carrying discussion-type programmes in which the public takes an active part. The International Press Club, established on 7 April 2017, holds topical discussions about the events and reforms taking place in Uzbekistan and is extremely popular with the viewing public. Ahborot-24, a 24-hour television programme, provides interactive media access around the clock. In order to further strengthen the independence of the media, there are plans to adopt laws addressing its economic base, State support for the media and television and radio broadcasting. A series of government programmes are planned to support print and electronic media projects with significant impact on society, to train professional journalists and to establish a journalism and media university.

D45. Freedom of association

66. Significant steps have been taken to liberalize the legislation on NGOs. Artificial barriers hampering their work have been removed, thus promoting interaction between the State and civil society in addressing important problems. Since 1 January 2014 the fees for State registration of NGOs have been reduced five-fold and for the registration of their insignia by two and a half times; the tax for registration of their subsidiaries has been repealed and registration of NGOs of persons with disabilities, veterans, women and children is taxed at 50 per cent of the normal rate. NGOs are exempt from 10 kinds of taxes and other mandatory payments (including profit taxes and property and value added taxes).

67. NGOs may only be dissolved or prohibited or have their activities restricted on the basis of judicial decisions, and they may only be disbanded by a decision of their highest decisional authority or of a judicial decision. The latter must be issued in accordance with the rules on the disbanding of NGOs approved by the decision adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers on 15 January 2015.

68. Under the new rules, a judicial body receiving documentation for the official registration of an NGO must take a decision about its registration within one month of the date of submission. It must provide a written reply to the founders of the organization within three days, informing them of the reason for a denial of registration. A denial is not an obstacle to subsequent submission of the documentation. A decision to refuse registration is subject to appeal before a court. These rules are governed by the regulations approved by the decision of the Cabinet Ministers issued on 10 March 2014.

69. In the past nine years, the Public Fund to support NGOs and other civil society institutions and the Parliamentary Commission active in this field have earmarked over 60 billion sum to such bodies in the form of subsidies, grants and social service contracts. In the past four years, the amount of funding has tripled.

70. The Social Partnership Act of 25 September 2014 laid the foundations for the legal relations and for the principles of engagement and cooperation between Government agencies and civil society. In 2017 the Act was amended to provide for NGOs to take part in a social partnership to combat corruption. There are plans to strengthen legal guarantees in the field of public administration by adopting laws on public oversight, public-private cooperation and the public service.

D51. Administration of justice and fair trial

71. Dramatic steps have been taken in recent years to strengthen the independence and autonomy of the judiciary. Guarantees of the protection of human rights in the administration of justice have been strengthened. The court system and law enforcement

agencies, including procuratorial and internal affairs bodies and penitentiary institutions, have been improved. The Supreme Judicial Council of the Republic of Uzbekistan was established on the basis of a presidential decree of 21 February 2017. It has been assigned the task of organizing the judiciary through competitive selections of candidates for judgeships, appointments of judges and the provision of recommendations for senior judicial positions. It has also been tasked with the adoption of measures to prevent breaches of the inviolability of judges and interference in their work in the administration of justice.

72. As from 1 June 2017: the Supreme Court and the Higher Economic Court were merged, and a single higher judicial body covering civil, criminal, administrative and economic proceedings — the Supreme Court of Uzbekistan — was established; administrative courts were formed, and the commercial courts of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, the provinces and the city of Tashkent were transformed into economic courts. A court services department was established under the Supreme Court to organize logistical and financial support for the courts.

73. Judicial oversight of pretrial investigation bodies has been strengthened and the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure have been amended: punishments such as detention have been removed from article 43 of the Criminal Code, and the right for a court to review the suspension of postal and telegraphic correspondence has been included in article 166[1] of the Code of Criminal Procedure. Article 226 of the Code of Criminal Procedure establishes that police custody must not exceed 48 hours from the moment an arrested person is handed over to an internal affairs body or other law enforcement agency, and article 415[1] of the Code of Criminal Procedure establishes new rules whereby a court can directly drop an incomplete preliminary investigation or a case in which there are substantive violations of the Code without sending the criminal case for further investigation.

E1. Economic, social and cultural rights — General measures of implementation

E21, 22 and 25. Right to an adequate standard of living, food and protection from poverty

74. Every year, presidential decrees introduce increases in wages, grants, pensions and benefits, substantially raising citizens' income levels. Positive structural changes, economic expansion and employment programmes have ensured a growth rate of 113.5 per cent in per capita real aggregate income. Under the service sector development programme for 2016–2020, some 14,600 new items have been established in the service sector, 194 new model service packages have been introduced, 1,632 new mobile communications stations have been set up and public transport services have been improved with the addition of 63 new passenger transportation links and 54 new hotels in the regions.

75. A presidential decree issued on 2 September 2017 gave legal entities the right to obtain foreign currency at banks and physical persons the right to freely exchange foreign currency with no restrictions, with effect from 5 September 2017. The decree also repealed a requirement that exporters must sell their foreign currency proceeds.

76. Presidential and government decisions were issued between 2014 and 2017 to improve healthy nutrition policies, ensure effective food industry management and implement measures under the Micronutrient Deficiency Prevention Act. Steps are being taken to implement a policy framework and set of measures to ensure healthy nutrition in the period 2015–2020. The aim is to prevent and reduce the spread of diseases related to poor nutrition and to improve food rations served at children's institutions, schools and medical facilities. A Health and Epidemiological Welfare Act has been adopted, which strengthens food safety protection provisions and requirements applicable to the production, transport, storage and sale of foodstuffs and food products.

77. A presidential decision was adopted on 12 September 2017 on additional measures to support poor population groups. The decision calls for targeted local social support

programmes for such groups in 2017–2018, with: microcredits at advantageous interest rates for the purchase of tools and equipment for self-employment; non-reimbursable grants to low-income families for the purchase or repair of housing and for the purchase of household appliances or the payment of medical services; an increase of budget allocations in 2017 and 2018 for support to low-income families with children under 14 years of age; and material assistance for such families, with a doubling of the number of beneficiaries.

78. Under the State budget for 2018, 230.3 billion sum was allocated for communal works; 815 billion sum (three times more than in 2017) was earmarked for the provision of equipment at preschool educational establishments, 559.1 billion sum was approved to equip 48 institutions of higher learning and 803.6 billion sum was appropriated for the reconstruction of 236 medical facilities.

79. Steps are being taken for the realization of citizens' rights to participate in cultural life and to engage in physical culture and sport. Efforts to develop culture and sport and to radically improve public policy in this area include the following: a presidential decree of 15 February 2017 established the Ministry of Culture and the State Committee on Physical Culture and Sport, setting out their tasks and new structures and creating a Fund for the Development of Culture and Art; a presidential decision of 31 May 2017 approved a programme for further development and improvements in the fields of culture and art in 2017–2021; measures have been adopted to improve the work of museums and theatres and for the aesthetic education of young people; and a presidential decision of 3 June 2017 approved a programme for the further improvement of physical culture and sport and sport medicine, and for making better use of existing sports facilities and the construction of new ones.

E31. Right to work

80. There have been improvements in the legal regulation of employment and labour relations in Uzbekistan. The following concepts have been defined in the Labour Code and the Employment Act: "unemployed persons", "work suitable for unemployed persons", "work not suitable for unemployed persons", and "employed persons". A list has been drawn up of persons who benefit from additional guarantees for job placement, including human trafficking victims, persons released from places of deprivation of liberty, young people, persons with disabilities and persons approaching retirement age. Refusal to hire such persons incurs legal liability. Additional guarantees are set out for job placement in other countries and a system has been put in place to monitor the implementation of the annual job creation programmes and to develop local programmes.

81. Under a decision issued by the Cabinet of Ministers on 27 April 2017, measures were taken to improve occupational safety and health at enterprises and organizations. A presidential decision issued on 24 May 2017 established a consortium to support home-based work with the granting of loans and support for persons engaged in such employment. Decisions issued by the Cabinet of Ministers on 4 July 2017, 8 August 2017 and 14 October 2017 established a single, centralized electronic registry of citizens' individual insurance contributions. On 1 January 2018 a transition was made to an electronic system for registering people's employment service records. A national centre for learning the basics of entrepreneurship has been set up with State funding, and regulations have been approved on the procedures for admission of persons who are unemployed or not engaged in self-employment at regional vocational training centres and for their training at such facilities.

82. The Ministry of Labour has been transformed into the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations, with an accent on the development of local and sectoral employment programmes and the use of State procurement orders for the creation of jobs and establishment of quotas for the job placement of socially vulnerable groups. As from 1 January 2018, the income tax rates for the single social benefit were reduced by 50 per cent for graduates of secondary specialized schools or institutions of higher education during their first year of employment, and by 25 per cent for their second and third years of work, with the exception of persons placed in State-funded organizations. An electronic labour

records system has been established and NGOs have been given the right to provide remunerated placement services for employment within the country and in other countries on the basis of licences, and a Fund for Public Works of the Ministry of Employment has been set up.

83. To establish favourable conditions for entrepreneurs and businesses and a system to defend their rights, over 1,200 pieces of legislation have been adopted, including 156 laws, 138 presidential decrees and decisions and 280 decisions of the Cabinet of Ministers. A principle according to which entrepreneurs are given priority in their dealings with State, law enforcement and supervisory agencies has been introduced.

84. In 2017, 336,000 new posts were created. The job creation was facilitated by State policies in support of entrepreneurship. A programme of comprehensive measures has been approved to accelerate development of entrepreneurial activity, ensure full protection of private ownership and improve the business climate in Uzbekistan.

E41. Right to health

85. The State system for health administration has been improved. International medical and health regulations drawn up by WHO to respond to the global spread of diseases have been introduced. A presidential decision of 24 February 2016 established the Department for Medical and Social Assistance for Persons with Disabilities in the Ministry of Health. The Department provides services to children with disabilities, war veterans, former members of the military and older persons living alone. Decisions issued by the Cabinet of Ministers on 12 September 2017 and 18 September 2017 approved a new statute for the Ministry of Health. Measures have been taken to improve the system for the continuous training of medical personnel at State medical facilities by sending them to leading medical and scientific institutions in other countries and by bringing foreign specialists to Uzbekistan.

86. The basic tasks and fields of activity of private health-care services were defined by a presidential decision of 1 April 2017. A list of the various types of medical actions that may not be carried out by private health-care bodies has been approved, along with a programme to foster the development of private health care, as follows. Private health-care organizations are exempted, until 1 January 2022, from paying any taxes or mandatory contributions to the various State funds. The amounts they thus save are to be used for the procurement of modern equipment and the provision of free medical care for members of socially vulnerable groups.

87. By a presidential decision of 20 June 2017, major improvements were adopted to specialized medical assistance, and access in rural areas was broadened to medical services provided by specialized health centres. The legal status of the specialized health centres was changed; they were transformed from joint-stock companies into public institutions acting as the country's leading medical establishments in their respective fields. A programme has been approved for the further development of specialized health care for 2017–2021.

88. Systematic efforts have been made in Uzbekistan to strengthen reproductive health. A presidential decision of 25 December 2017 approved a State programme for the early detection of congenital and hereditary diseases for 2018–2022. The programme will make it possible to introduce generalized prenatal ultrasound checks, and thus reduce the number of children born with congenital birth defects. A presidential decree of 1 August 2014 on the State programme is currently being implemented for further improvement of the reproductive health of the population and protection of the health of mothers, children and adolescents for the period 2014–2018.

E51. Right to education

89. The quality of education is being raised at all levels and State administration in this field is being improved. A presidential decision was adopted on 8 August 2017 on the

improvement of the work of the Ministry of Education. The structures of the Ministry, its regional offices and the bodies falling under their jurisdiction have been reviewed. Pursuant to a presidential decision of 9 September 2017, the system of preschool education has been reformed. New types of preschool institutions have been set up on the basis of public-private partnerships. They have been given greater opportunities to directly communicate and enter into contracts with private-sector companies delivering children's food, and a road map has been approved for the further development of the preschool education system. A presidential decree of 30 September 2017 established the Ministry of Preschool Education and a corresponding government ministry in the Republic of Karakalpakstan.

90. On the basis of a presidential order of 14 March 2017, measures have been taken to further improve educational process at secondary schools specializing in the sciences by eliminating inefficiency, and a programme of measures has been adopted to support such schools as they prepare students for higher education. A presidential decision of 20 April 2017 approved a programme for the comprehensive development of higher education for 2017–2021. The programme provides for measures to strengthen the material and technical base of institutions of higher education and for the use of new forms of retraining and skill enhancement of teachers at such institutions. A State inspectorate has been set up to monitor the quality of education.

91. A presidential decision of 15 March 2017 defined the tasks of non-State education, the conditions and principles for providing such services and the requirements for the legal entities engaged in such activities. Tax and other incentives were established for these types of educational institutions, along with means of providing comprehensive State support for their activities.

F11–F14. Advancement of women

92. Measures are constantly taken to more effectively guarantee and protect women's rights. The Women's Committee has sent the Legislative Chamber proposals for amendments to the Family Code calling for the establishment of the same minimum marriageable age for women and men. A bill on guarantees of equal rights and opportunities for women and men has undergone additional legal review, and a bill has been drafted on the prevention of domestic violence. The Family Code sets out the grounds for lowering the age of marriage for girls by a maximum of one year; these include pregnancy, the birth of a child or recognition of the minor as having full legal competence (emancipation of a minor). To provide for liability for violations of the legislation on the age of marriage, article 125^1 has been introduced into the Criminal Code and article 47^1 has been introduced into the Code of Administrative Liability.

93. Particular attention is paid to guarantees of women's labour rights: article 68 of the Labour Code strengthened guarantees for the job placement of single parents, parents with numerous children under 14 years of age and parents of children with disabilities, for graduates of colleges and institutions of higher education, including girls, and for victims of trafficking in persons, in particular women. Article 84 of the Labour Code exempts pregnant women, women with children under the age of 3 and graduates of colleges, schools specialized in the sciences and institutions of education from probationary periods once they are hired. A decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of 5 December 2017 lays down the procedure for interaction between local administrations and the Youth Union, the Women's Committee and agencies dealing with labour and employment matters for the public, for youth and for women.

94. The Code of Administrative Liability includes standards establishing that parents and persons in loco parentis are liable if they prevent children, including girls, from attending compulsory general education institutions or specialized vocational schools at the secondary level. Local administrations have established commissions for work with women and commissions for public oversight, and 8,700 advisers provide legal, psychological and other assistance to women and assist them in finding employment.

95. A system for the collection, analysis and compilation of gender statistics is being perfected in order to monitor the progress made in ensuring gender equality in the context

of nine strategic objectives. The system makes use of 176 indicators relating to demographics, health, education, employment, social protection, public and political life, entrepreneurship and other factors. Statistics are regularly published in compendiums under the title Women and Men in Uzbekistan, and a section on gender statistics has been set up on the State Statistical Committee's official website, www.stat.uz, at gender.stat.uz. A system has been set up to train representatives of State bodies and NGOs in the collection and analysis of gender statistics with the participation of international experts.

96. A government decision of 16 March 2017 approved a new provision on the responsibilities of the Deputy Prime Minister and chair of the Women's Committee, who is now responsible for ensuring the protection of women's rights and interests and for increasing their legal and political impact in society. A national plan of action for implementing the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was approved following consideration of the fifth national report of Uzbekistan. On 2 February 2018, a presidential decree was adopted with the aim of improving the activities of the Women's Committee, and a programme of comprehensive measures to support women and strengthen the institution of the family was approved.

F31. Children: definition, general principles and protection

97. The Tutorship and Guardianship Act, the Youth Policy Act and the Act on the Protection of Children from Information Harmful to their Health have been adopted.

98. According to the Youth Policy Act, young people include persons between 14 and 30 years of age, and the State is obliged to create the conditions required to ensure social support for them and the protection of the personal, political, economic, social and cultural rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of the young generation. The Act on the Protection of Children from Information Harmful to their Health, adopted in 2017, defines the concept of the child as a person under the age of 18 (i.e., a minor). It sets out guidelines for the protection of children against illegal informational and psychological inputs, manipulation and the dissemination of information that could prompt them to act antisocially, and it provides for the prevention of offences in this area. Measures have been taken to protect children's material rights. For example, provisions have been introduced into the Family Code reducing the amount of time a person can evade the payment of child support before criminal charges are brought and allowing for the possibility of child support payments until the child reaches the age of majority. Liability has been established for persons who disseminate material advocating a cult of violence or cruelty or who produce pornographic material using children, as well as for those who prevent children from receiving compulsory general secondary education.

99. A presidential decree of 3 February 2017 defines the duties of local government bodies in the area of education and the protection of the young generation against ideological threats. The decree introduced the post of local government deputy chair for youth affairs, and it approved a programme of comprehensive measures to further improve local government, including in the following areas: prevention of child neglect; child and young offenders and their rights; public oversight of the quality of education; and social support for families with numerous children and for low-income families.

100. The post of Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs for Youth Questions and corresponding posts of deputy heads of regional internal affairs departments have been established as part of the effort to combat child and youth crime. Measures have been taken to strengthen the status of the interdepartmental commissions on juvenile affairs working with bodies of the executive branch.

F33. Children: protection against exploitation

101. In line with the decent work country programme and agreements between Uzbekistan and the World Bank, every year between 2013 and 2017, ILO experts conducted monitoring of child labour and forced labour in the harvesting of cotton. The monitoring showed that the use of child labour had been eliminated in the cotton harvest, as

had the use of forced labour in the country. A helpline (8-371-2000-601) of the State Legal Inspectorate of Labour attached to the Ministry of Labour and an online consultant on the Ministry's website (www.mehnat.uz) have been in operation since September 2015. In 2016, the following were adopted: a plan of action to improve the working and employment conditions and social protection of agricultural workers for 2016–2018; a plan of action for the implementation of the ILO conventions to which Uzbekistan is a party concerning the prohibition against forced and child labour, in 2016; and a plan of action on practical measures to further enhance cooperation with ILO on the results of the participation of the delegation of Uzbekistan at the 105th session of the International Labour Conference.

102. The monitoring exercises carried out between 2013 and 2016 confirmed that the Government is undertaking effective preventive measures and conducting a major awareness campaign for the prevention of the use of child labour and forced labour during the cotton harvest. International experts noted the high level of awareness among children and the overall population of their rights and the establishment by the Federation of Trade Unions and the Ministry of Labour of a feedback mechanism to exchange information with the public and settle any complaints about violations of citizens' labour rights. A web resource for the feedback mechanism (www.fbm.uz) is up and running.

103. In February 2017, the report of the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations was published for the 106th session of the International Labour Conference. The Committee welcomed the implementation by the Government of Uzbekistan and by the social partners of their commitments. A plan has been adopted for a set of actions by the Coordination Council on Child Labour for 2017. It calls for implementation of the programme on decent work in Uzbekistan and of the plan of technical measures to implement the recommendations of the ILO Committee of Experts regarding compliance with ILO Conventions Nos. 105 and 182. A decision of the Senate of 4 October 2017 approved a range of measures to ensure citizens' labour rights in accordance with the national legislation and international labour standards.

104. See the Senate decision establishing a parliamentary commission on the protection of citizens' labour rights (headed by S. Artykov).

F34. Juvenile justice

105. The law provides for minors to be subject to legal standards that must be humane and indulgent. In accordance with article 81 of the Criminal Code, persons under the age of 18 who have committed crimes are subject to only three of the eight types of punishment provided by law: fines, punitive work or deprivation of liberty. No additional penalties may be applied to them. Long-term deprivation of liberty and life imprisonment cannot be imposed on a person by virtue of an offence committed while under the age of 18. Article 55 of the Criminal Code stipulates that the fact that the perpetrator of the offence is a minor is recognized as an extenuating circumstance.

106. Under article 558 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, remand in custody or house arrest as a preventive measure may be applied to minors only in exceptional cases, when they are accused of committing a premeditated crime punishable by deprivation of liberty for a period of more than 5 years and when other preventive measures cannot ensure appropriate conduct on the part of the accused.

107. Article 237 of the Code of Criminal Procedure provides for the possibility of applying preventive measures such as the placement of a minor under the supervision of parents, guardians or custodians, or the head of a children's institution. In criminal proceedings involving minors, the participation of the child's legal representative and defence counsel is mandatory, as is the participation of a teacher or psychologist during interrogation. In judicial proceedings, the participation of representatives of the enterprises, institutions and organizations where defendants have worked or studied and of the Interdepartmental Commission on Juvenile Affairs is mandatory.

108. Improved living conditions are being established at places of detention for minors, with better nutritional standards and daily recreation for them, in which they are given the

opportunity to have physical exercise and sports activities. They are also shown television programmes. There is strict observance of the principle of separation of arrested persons and remand prisoners who are minors from those who are adults.

109. Studies have shown that juvenile crime fell by 43 per cent between 2000 and 2016 and that the number of persons involved in juvenile crime declined by 34 per cent.

F4. Rights of persons with disabilities

110. It is one of the political priorities in Uzbekistan to take concrete steps to protect equal human rights for persons with disabilities. The system of State agencies providing social services and their power to act in this field are described by the Act on Social Services for Older Persons, Persons with Disabilities and Other Vulnerable Groups, adopted on 26 December 2016. A decision of the Cabinet of Ministers on measures to further strengthen social support for persons with disabilities and older persons living in Muruvvat and Sakhovat homes set up custodianship councils to support such bodies and defined the tasks of the National Custodian Council.

111. The provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities served as the basis for a presidential decree on measures to radically improve the system of State support for persons with disabilities, which was adopted on 1 December 2017. Pursuant to the decree, a bill is being drawn up on the rights of persons with disabilities and steps are being taken for the ratification of the Convention. A programme of comprehensive measures has been approved for the further improvement of the support system for persons with disabilities and for the strengthening of guarantees of their rights and freedoms. In the regions, specialized courses have been set up to teach sign language and Braille. Special computer programs and websites are being developed that take account of the specific needs of persons with disabilities, and special equipment for persons with disabilities is being introduced into public transport services. As from 1 March 2018, the acquisition of means of passenger transport that is unable to accommodate persons with disabilities will be prohibited; a 2 per cent quota for persons with disabilities will be introduced at institutions of higher education; and a flat tax rate will apply to entrepreneurs with disabilities, set at 50 per cent of the minimum monthly wage. A fund for support of persons with disabilities has been set up under the Ministry of Health, and from 1 June 2018, a single electronic registry of data on persons with disabilities will enter into service.

Challenges

112. Implementation of the Action Strategy on Five Priority Areas of the Country's Development for 2017–2021 is the priority for the State and for society.

113. In the field of rights and freedoms, the basic national priorities are outlined in the President's message of 22 December 2017 to the national parliament: (1) to improve the national system for the protection of human rights and freedoms through a radical change in the legal basis for the actions of the system, including those of legislative, executive and judicial bodies; (2) to fundamentally improve the quality and range of State services by perfecting the work of State bodies in this field; to cut back over 100 State administration and economic management agencies and strengthen public oversight of the work of State bodies; and (3) to increase the role of NGOs in addressing the problems of citizens and in providing support for vulnerable population groups through the establishment of the Presidential Public Advisory Council for the development of civil society; and to expedite the adoption of the law on public oversight and the establishment of public councils in all government bodies.